



Children and moms attend Ready, Set, Grow, at the Family Support Center. The group setting gives moms and children a chance to meet, play and discuss family issues. The group currently has 12 to 15 families attending regularly.

Families are the focus at the Family Support Center



Jonathan Sargent plays with a hammer during Ready, Set, Grow.

Photos by Airman 1st Class James T. May

**By Staff Sgt. Ed Scott
AWFC Public Affairs**

Nellis' Family Support Center was recently selected as the best Family Support Center in Air Combat Command for the large base category.

"From talking to staff members at other Family Support Centers, I've come to realize that strong teamwork is what sets us apart," said Ms. Susan Robinson, FSC director.

"We might not always agree on things but we're able to talk through the problem," she said. "We have the same values and the same goals."

Ms. Robinson said the goals they agree on are to increase Air Force readiness and retention.

"A family that functions smoothly has a member that is ready to pack-up and go in a moments notice. A family happy with the Air Force is a family willing to stay in the Air Force.

"This is not just verbage," Ms. Robinson said. "We really believe this and work as a team to accomplish this mission.

"That is what makes this job exciting,

it's new all the time and you never really know what you're going to be doing from day to day."

Assisting families with the rigors of military life comes in the form of various programs run by various FSC departments.

Ms. Robinson said their Professional Financial Management Program added an additional person last year so the program can do much more to prevent financial problems.

Under the team of Mr. Tony Taylor and Tech. Sgt. Arturo Bowe, the FSC readiness program increased the scope and type of financial briefings given to military members prior to deployment, and quadrupled the number of individuals counseled.

"Not everything has gone smoothly – as with our Family Life and volunteer programs," said Ms. Robinson. "There has been turmoil in these areas due to a lot of staff turnover but I don't think our customers even noticed – a credit to our staff and their team efforts."

Family Life programs include Toddler Moms' group, a program where toddlers get together and learn how to interact



Above, Ms. Tricia Kongos plays with 1-year-old Abby at Ready, Set, Grow. Right, Corren Kemmebrac, 9-and-a-half months, displays who is No.1 in his life for everyone attending Ready, Set, Grow.



Ms. Stephanie Gonzalez shows 4-month-old Samantha her reflection at Ready, Set, Grow.

with other children and moms can socialize with other adults. Other programs include: Bundles for Babies, Give Parents a Break, Preparation for Parenthood and Air Force as a Second Language.

Air Force Aid improved its efforts with new programs to include free babysitting during moves and car care for deployed personnel – "not just assistance for crisis," she said. Through its efforts, Nellis' Air Force Aid Office gave \$438,000 in loans during the year.

Another area the FSC has worked on the past year is its involvement with the Las Vegas community.

"We're involved in the community on two different levels," Ms. Robinson said. "Many individuals are connected in the community in a personal level – volunteering. The second level is a collaboration of efforts with different agencies, such as the job market.

"I work closely with United Way," Ms. Robinson said. "They do a lot of research and have a lot of knowledge about people's needs – in fact I use some of their management techniques here."

Other community involvement examples include Gary Pruitt, Relocation

Assistance director, working closely with the Clark County Magnet School Programs and other schools as well as the Career Program's job fairs held here.

Through his efforts the FSC held school zoning meetings, addressed school issues, and according to Ms. Robinson, helped parents feel better and more confident in schools.

"There are many resources in the area and the more we know about them the more we can use them," she said.

Along the lines of being able to use resources in the area, Ms. Robinson said their future plans include opening a satellite FSC at Indian Springs.

"We understand it is difficult for them to come down here for services," she said. "Initially we are looking at having an individual out there twice a week and we'll see how it goes from there.

"We need to focus more on our outreach – we need to get the word out to our younger troops," she said. "They need to know we're here to help.

"The worse thing that can happen to us is to get in a rut and stay there," Ms. Robinson said. "As the military and its mission change we need to change with it."



One-year-old Hannah Joy plays with her 1-year-old friend Matdalyne Buffington at Ready, Set, Grow. Below, Mrs. Karri and Mr. Josh Christopherson listen to the speaker at the new parenting program at the Family Support Center.



Above, Ms. Jackie Brown, program manager at the Family Support Center. Right, Ryan Gorshe, 2, takes a picture with his toy camera during Ready, Set, Grow.